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C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 000676

SIPDIS

STATE FOR PRM, ABIDJAN AND NAIROBI FOR REFCOORDS, ROME FOR
DHS, GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/2013

TAGS: [GA](#) [GH](#) [INS](#) [IO](#) [PREF](#)

SUBJECT: CORRUPTION INSPECTION OF IOM/BANJUL COMPLETED

REF: ACCRA 501

Classified By: Refcoord for Admissions Carla T. Nadeau for reasons 1.5
b and d.

11. (C) Summary: West African Regional Refugee Coordinator for Admissions met with International Organization for Migration (IOM) Head of Mission to discuss the findings of the recent inspector general's investigation at IOM branch office Banjul. The team concluded that fraud concerns only reached the Canadian resettlement program. While no solid evidence of wrongdoing was uncovered, the IG team left Banjul sufficiently suspicious to recommend a down-sizing and restructuring of the office to include the removal of the staffer in question. End summary.

12. (C) Upon his return from consultations in Geneva, HOM Antonio Palosa debriefed Refcoord on the findings of the recent IG investigation of IOM Branch Office Banjul. Relieved that the concerns outlined in ref a. only reached the Canadian program, Palosa appeared confident that fraud had not tainted the US Refugee Program (USRP). Providing a brief readout of the investigation, Palosa relayed concerns about lack of corroborating testimony from refugees. Upon hearing of the arrival of the investigatory team, refugees deliberately maintained a very low profile providing little concrete testimony of the alleged fraud perpetrated by staffer Gomez. Despite the lack of detailed testimony, the IG uncovered other, potentially damaging evidence that something was amiss at the office. Specifically, Gomez had over 20 refugee case files for the Canadian program in her desk drawer that should have been handed over to the Canadians. The files were at various stages of the resettlement process and there was no reasonable explanation as to why these specific cases were held up.

13. (C) Palosa expects that the IOM/Banjul office will be re-shuffled and down-sized. Although the IG staff recommended the firing of Gomez, their recommendation must be approved by their IG superiors in Geneva. Assuming this approval will come through, Palosa believed that Gomez will be one of a significant number of staff to lose their job. Noting that there are not many cases left in Banjul that need to depart, IOM is using this opportunity to down-size and leave a more appropriately sized staff of only two or three to run operations.

14. (C) Comment: While it is certainly good news that IOM does not believe the alleged fraud reached the USRP and also that remedial action is being taken, refugee watchers should maintain close scrutiny of the office. As little evidence was provided by affected refugees, IOM has not managed to discover the true depth of the alleged fraud. Furthermore, given the refugees' reluctance to speak, it remains to be seen if there has been some sort of quid pro quo for their silence. End comment.

YATES